



An Analysis of the Influence of Vocabulary Range on Students' Academic Performance in the English Department

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of targeted vocabulary instruction compared to conventional language education in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery and language academic performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combined quantitative data from pre- and post-tests with qualitative insights gathered through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative findings provided nuanced insights into the teaching and learning experiences. Lecturers in Group A utilized context-based and interactive approaches, fostering greater student engagement and long-term vocabulary retention. In contrast, Group B relied on traditional methods such as rote memorization, which, although effective for short-term recall, often failed to sustain student motivation. Additionally, factors such as prior vocabulary knowledge, intrinsic motivation, and active classroom engagement significantly influenced the outcomes of both groups.

The findings suggest the importance of adapting teaching methods to meet student's diverse needs and preferences. Recommendations for optimizing vocabulary instruction include integrating contextual learning activities, fostering student participation, and addressing motivational factors to ensure long-term retention and application of vocabulary in various academic contexts. This research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the implementation of targeted vocabulary instruction as a critical component of effective language education,

Keywords: *vocabulary range, targeted vocabulary instruction, academic performance.*

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A comprehensive vocabulary is crucial for students to articulate their thoughts effectively in writing. It enables people to articulate their thoughts, emotions, and arguments with clarity and brevity. In the absence of a varied vocabulary, students may find it challenging to articulate their thoughts effectively, leading to the use of repeated or ambiguous terminology, so

compromising the overall quality of their writing. Consequently, cultivating an extensive vocabulary is essential for improving students' writing proficiency and facilitating successful reader engagement. By augmenting their lexicon, students can choose the most suitable words to articulate their message, thus enhancing the engagement and impact of their writing. Furthermore, a rich vocabulary empowers students to comprehend intricate materials and proficiently analyze and evaluate them.

In storytelling, an extensive vocabulary can enhance the narrative's engagement and memorability for the audience. When examining a complex work in class, a student with a rich vocabulary may more readily comprehend the author's intended meaning and articulate their findings effectively during discussions. A rich vocabulary enables students to succeed in many academic problems and undertakings. It enables people to express their thoughts and ideas with accuracy and clarity, enhancing their communication effectiveness. Moreover, an extensive vocabulary can enhance students' confidence in their academic capabilities, motivating them to confront new obstacles and engage with intricate subjects effortlessly.

Smith et al. (2018) have conducted research that has shown the beneficial effects of vocabulary development on the academic performance and holistic development of students. Research indicates that students possessing a rich vocabulary typically achieve higher scores on standardized assessments, have superior reading comprehension abilities, and excel in writing assignments. Studies have demonstrated that an extensive vocabulary can improve students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze and assess information more proficiently. Critical thinking encompasses cognitive abilities, dispositions, and mental habits, including open-mindedness, curiosity, and a readiness to entertain various perspectives. Instruction in critical thinking must encompass both universal principles and specialized applications to improve skill transferability. Various teaching methodologies, including infusion and immersion, might influence the cultivation of critical thinking abilities in students (Lai,

2011). The research indicates that vocabulary development is an essential element of a comprehensive education and can profoundly influence students' success in diverse academic pursuits.

In addition to vocabulary development, students must also develop critical thinking skills to succeed academically. Critical thinking entails the analysis of information, the evaluation of arguments, and the formulation of informed conclusions grounded in evidence. Engaging students with scientific vocabulary and prompting critical analysis of experimental outcomes fosters a profound comprehension of the subject matter and enhances their problem-solving skills. A comprehensive approach to education can enhance academic achievement and future success in science by incorporating essential academic skills, interdisciplinary competencies, behavioral skills, and educational and career navigation abilities (Ryan et al., 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Vocabulary range refers to the breadth and depth of a writer's lexicon. It encompasses not only the quantity of words known but also the ability to employ them accurately and appropriately in diverse contexts. Measuring vocabulary range can be achieved through various quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative measures, such as type-token ratio and lexical density, provide numerical indicators of lexical diversity. Qualitative assessments, on the other hand, involve analyzing the complexity and sophistication of word choices within a text. Recent studies, as highlighted by Schmitt (2011) and Nation (2013), have emphasized the importance of considering both breadth and depth of

vocabulary when assessing language proficiency.

Researchers have defined vocabulary range in writing as the variety and complexity of words employed by a writer in a text (Schmitt, 2010). This encompasses both the breadth of a writer's lexicon (Nation, 2013) and the ability to use words accurately and appropriately in diverse contexts (Laufer, 2012). Assessing vocabulary range can be achieved through various methods, including comparing texts against standardized vocabulary lists, analyzing lexical sophistication through measures like type-token ratio (Read, 2004), and comparing vocabulary usage between texts. Lexical richness, variation, and sophistication are considered crucial factors in language development (Zhai, 2016). A broader vocabulary range is often associated with higher levels of language proficiency and may indicate a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Schmitt, 2011). Studies have consistently shown that students with a wider vocabulary range can express their ideas more clearly and effectively, leading to improved overall writing performance (Nation, 2001). Additionally, research suggests a close link between vocabulary range in writing and reading comprehension. A robust vocabulary empowers students to better understand and interpret written texts, fostering stronger reading skills (Stahl, 2016). Overall, the existing literature provides compelling evidence that developing a broad vocabulary range is essential for academic success in writing. By equipping students with a diverse and sophisticated lexicon, educators can empower them to communicate effectively, comprehend complex texts, and achieve their full academic potential.

In addition to academic language performance, a varied vocabulary can significantly enhance communication abilities in various social and professional contexts. Vocabulary proficiency plays a vital role in improving communication skills (Ashraf et al., 2019). A student with an extensive vocabulary may articulate their thoughts and ideas more clearly and persuasively during class discussions, leading to more meaningful contributions (Nation, 2013). In a professional environment, an individual possessing a comprehensive vocabulary can effectively communicate intricate thoughts and concepts to colleagues and clients, ultimately leading to increased productivity and success in their field (Grant & Satterthwaite, 2009). Moreover, a sophisticated vocabulary can augment one's ability to convey emotions, thoughts, and ideas with precision and nuance, allowing for more impactful communication (Lea, Kita, & Dunbar, 2014). As such, investing time and effort into expanding one's vocabulary can have far-reaching benefits beyond just academic writing. It can also make a significant difference in personal and professional relationships, as individuals who can express themselves clearly and eloquently are often seen as more persuasive and credible. Additionally, a strong vocabulary can enable individuals to engage in more meaningful and stimulating conversations, fostering deeper connections with others and broadening their perspectives.

There are some researches which consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between vocabulary range and writing performance, highlighting its pivotal role in both academic and professional settings. Individuals with a diverse vocabulary are more likely to excel

in tasks requiring critical thinking, as a rich lexicon empowers them to formulate and justify their ideas with precision and nuance (Nation, 2013). In alignment with Angeliki (2013) findings, vocabulary is linked to reading comprehension. A rich vocabulary enables individuals to articulate their thoughts and ideas effectively, facilitating the understanding and interpretation of complex texts (Laufer, 2012). Vocabulary's influence on reading comprehension extends beyond direct relationships. Studies have shown that vocabulary can indirectly impact comprehension through mediators such as phonological awareness and decoding (Kyle et al., 2017). Furthermore, the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension can be reciprocal, where a strong vocabulary aids comprehension and skilled comprehension can infer word meanings from context (Stahl, 2016). Additionally, a third variable, such as conceptual knowledge or a common aptitude, might influence both vocabulary and reading comprehension.

The precise nature of the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension remains a subject of ongoing debate. While some researchers advocate for a direct causal relationship, others propose a more complex interplay. Regardless of the specific mechanism, it is evident that vocabulary plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting written material. Further research is needed to fully elucidate the intricate relationship between these two cognitive constructs.

Students' vocabulary range can be influenced by exposure to different texts, quality of education, and individual motivation. Students who are enthusiastic readers may inherently possess a more extensive vocabulary due to the substantial number of terms they encounter in

literature. Conversely, students who experience difficulties in reading may possess a restricted vocabulary due to insufficient exposure to new terms. The quality of education in vocabulary development significantly influences a student's capacity to enhance their lexicon. Teachers who deliver detailed vocabulary training, including the elucidation of word meanings and tools for deciphering unfamiliar terms, can enhance students' understanding abilities. Personal motivation significantly influences vocabulary acquisition, as demonstrated by the structural equation modeling research (Jang et al., 2022). Students eager to acquire new vocabulary and proactively pursue expansion opportunities are more likely to see enhancements in their reading comprehension. Integrating vocabulary enhancement exercises into daily courses and promoting independent reading among students can significantly aid their overall word learning. Furthermore, students may deliberately pursue demanding reading materials to encounter a broader array of terminology in context. Moreover, establishing a positive and supportive educational atmosphere in which students feel at ease experimenting with new vocabulary can enhance their confidence and propensity to engage with language. A supportive and non-competitive classroom environment can enhance student participation by cultivating trust and encouraging the expression of opinions (Susak, 2016). Ultimately, an amalgamation of effective instruction, student motivation, and a nurturing classroom atmosphere can result in substantial advancements in vocabulary development and reading comprehension skills.

In addition to conventional

vocabulary instruction, incorporating multimedia resources such as videos, podcasts, and interactive games can provide students with diverse contexts in which to encounter and practice new vocabulary. By exposing students to words in authentic, real-world scenarios, educators can help them make deeper connections between words and their meanings (Herrington & Oliver, 2020). Moreover, incorporating regular vocabulary assessments and feedback sessions can help track students' progress and provide targeted support where needed. By consistently reinforcing and expanding students' vocabulary knowledge, educators can help them become more proficient and confident language users. By creating opportunities for students to connect new vocabulary to their personal experiences and prior knowledge, educators can facilitate meaningful learning. For example, using video clips from students' favorite TV shows or movies can make vocabulary learning more relevant and engaging (Prensky, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted with a sample size of 48 students in the first academic year in UPI YPTK Padang from diverse linguistic contexts to evaluate the efficacy of targeted vocabulary instruction. The participants were chosen from several grade levels of academic performance and represented the general student population at the institution. The research sought to assess the influence of vocabulary education on students' linguistic advancement and academic achievement. The participants were categorized into two groups: one receiving specialized vocabulary instruction and the other receiving conventional language

education. Both groups underwent pre-and post-tests to assess their language growth and academic performance throughout the study.

This study used a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies, to assess the efficacy of focused vocabulary education in improving students' language abilities and academic achievement. The quantitative component concentrated on using pre-tests and post-tests to measure two different student groups' academic performance and language development methodically. While the other group received conventional language education that followed a wider curriculum. The first group received focused vocabulary training, which involved systematically introducing and reinforcing vocabulary using certain methodologies and procedures. Tasks including matching terms to their definitions, creating sentences with recently introduced words, and recognizing synonyms and antonyms were among the assessments used in this study. These assignments were thoughtfully designed to assess the students' vocabulary depth and their capacity to use it in relevant situations.

Meanwhile, by exploring the lived experiences of both lecturers and students with various teaching strategies in greater detail, the qualitative component aimed to balance the numerical results. The comprehensive, in-depth narratives were obtained through semi-structured interviews of the teaching and learning processes. These interviews looked at a range of topics, including how lecturers modified their lessons to meet the requirements of different students, the difficulties they had in putting these tactics into practice, and how students reacted to various methods. External factors like

students' past vocabulary knowledge, their degree of engagement during courses, and their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn were also investigated in the qualitative investigation. These elements were examined to determine how they might interact and affect the efficacy of focused vocabulary training.

This study's integration of quantitative and qualitative data (mixed-method approach) offered a comprehensive view of the effects of focused vocabulary training. By exploring the fundamental processes and contextual elements that contributed to these outcomes, the qualitative findings provided depth, while the quantitative results provided quantifiable proof of the approach's efficacy.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative data obtained from pre-tests and post-tests offered valuable insights into the efficacy of targeted vocabulary instruction in comparison to conventional language education. Based on changes in students' scores before and after the intervention, the study sought to evaluate two important aspects: academic performance and vocabulary acquisition.

Both Group A (Targeted Vocabulary Instruction) and Group B (Conventional Language Education) completed the same vocabulary assessments to improve their vocabulary mastery. These assessments included tasks like matching words to their definitions, using words in sentences, and recognizing synonyms and antonyms.

According to the pre-test findings, Group A had a moderate initial vocabulary grasp, with an average score of 65 out of 100. Group B, on the other hand, had a

somewhat lower average pre-test score of 63 out of 100, indicating that their vocabulary knowledge was comparable to that of the other group. Group A, which received focused vocabulary training, demonstrated a significant improvement following the intervention. The average post-test score rose to 85 out of 100, indicating a 30% gain in vocabulary knowledge. The average post-test score increased to 73 out of 100, showing a 16% increase in vocabulary knowledge, but this development was less prominent in Group B, which received conventional language instruction. These findings imply that focused vocabulary training outperformed traditional language teaching strategies in terms of vocabulary acquisition.

The qualitative analysis provided a comprehensive, detailed study of both lecturers' and students' experiences with various teaching styles, revealing light on the aspects that affected the success of focused vocabulary training. To obtain thorough insights into how the teaching strategies were applied and perceived, semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students were conducted. This allowed for a deeper comprehension of the complexities involved in vocabulary development. It was pleasant and difficult for lecturers, especially those in Group A (Targeted Vocabulary Instruction), to modify their methods of instruction to meet the various needs of their students. Lecturers reported employing a range of strategies, including context-based learning, which teaches vocabulary through storytelling, real-world situations, and interactive tasks that help students relate terms to real-world applications. The purpose of this approach was to make learning vocabulary more interesting and significant. Furthermore, some lecturers

complained about how hard it was to keep students' attention and excitement throughout the courses, especially when trying to achieve a balance between the curriculum's more general objectives and the vocabulary-focused emphasis. Despite these challenges, several lecturers noticed that the focused approach promoted a more engaged and active learning environment, which they believed was essential for vocabulary retention.

From the perspective of the students, Group A's answers were usually more positive, with students reporting that the dynamic character of the lessons had increased their motivation and engagement. Numerous students noted how using based-on-context vocabulary acquisition improved their ability to remember and apply new terms by helping them connect them to everyday circumstances. In order to gain a deeper comprehension of the language being taught, students valued the chance to engage in peer collaborations, conversations, and the innovative use of multimedia resources including interactive exercises and movies. Several students specifically stated that they felt more comfortable using and remembering the new terminology because of the individualized attention they received from teachers, whether in the form of feedback or specially designed learning activities. However, students also understood that gaining new words required patience and persistence, with some admitting that mastering the focused vocabulary strategy required constant work.

Students in Group B (Conventional Language Education), on the other hand, had a more varied experience. Many students were dissatisfied with the lack of diversity and interaction in the courses, even while others thought the

conventional method, which mostly relied on rote retention and vocabulary lists, was useful in the short term for vocabulary recall. These students believed that conventional methods of teaching frequently resulted in a more passive learning environment where they were required to remember definitions and terms by heart without necessarily comprehending how they were used in context. As a result, they were less involved in class and frequently had trouble remembering words over time. Some students found it challenging to remain motivated and engaged in the curriculum because of the monotony caused by the lack of interactive and creative elements in the courses. Many students in Group B expressed that the courses felt distant from their daily lives and did not give them enough opportunities to actively employ the vocabulary in meaningful ways, even though they realized how important vocabulary was to their academic achievement.

The qualitative findings also highlighted the importance of extrinsic factors such as existing vocabulary knowledge and student motivation in determining the success of vocabulary education. Both teaching approaches were more effective for students who had a stronger vocabulary basis, particularly those who had previously developed effective word-learning skills and had been exposed to a variety of reading materials. Whether they were in Group A or Group B, they had no trouble understanding and remembering new terms. Conversely, students who lacked an extensive vocabulary base had more difficulty, especially when learning did not relate to real-world situations and practical application in conventional environments.

Another important element affecting the efficacy of vocabulary training was motivation. Intrinsically motivated students were more likely to interact with the content and take full advantage of the teaching strategies because they were sincerely interested in expanding their vocabulary for academic or personal development. Intrinsically driven students flourished in Group A, where interactive and captivating teaching methods were used. They took responsibility for their education and actively participated in activities. Students in Group B, on the other hand, were more extrinsically motivated and frequently motivated more by the need to get good results than by genuine pleasure in learning new words. Variations in student performance and engagement between the two groups were influenced by these disparities in motivation levels.

The involvement of students in the lessons was another significant topic examined in the qualitative data. Students reported being more involved in their learning process in Group A, where active learning practices were prioritized. Many said they loved the chance to use new words in interactive contexts including role-plays, group debates, and problem-solving exercises, and they felt more responsible for their development. Through critical thinking about language use in various circumstances, these exercises not only assisted students in practicing new words but also enhanced their comprehension. In contrast, Group B students experienced a greater degree of disengagement and a lack of engagement during their lessons, which were more teacher-centered and centered around passive learning techniques. Students had fewer opportunities to actively utilize and practice the vocabulary due to the lack of interactive assignments, which

made it harder for them to remember and use the words in everyday contexts.

Overall, the qualitative results showed how important motivation, engagement, and prior knowledge are for making vocabulary teaching work. Because it included interactive and context-driven learning experiences that actively engaged students, the Targeted Vocabulary Instruction strategy in Group A was more successful in creating a deeper relationship to the vocabulary. On the other hand, Group B's more conventional approaches had trouble keeping students motivated and engaged, which resulted in less successful vocabulary learning. The study emphasizes that learning vocabulary involves more than just retention; it also entails actively engaging with the material and relating it to personal experiences and real-world situations.

Implications for educators and curriculum development

By investigating these topics further, researchers may be able to create more focused and successful educational programs and get a deeper comprehension of how vocabulary skills affect academic achievement. Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness of different vocabulary teaching techniques and strategies can help educators adjust their lessons to better support students' language development.

More studies in this field could generally assist educators enhance their language instruction, which would ultimately benefit students' academic and professional performance. For student who struggle with language acquisition, this research could help develop more targeted therapy. By identifying successful vocabulary teaching strategies, educators can create a more inclusive learning

environment and better fulfill all of the requirements of their students. Vocabulary study has an impact outside of the classroom as well because strong language abilities are essential for overcoming academic obstacles, forming meaningful relationships, and excelling at employment. achievement in a variety of areas of life. Whether in a social, professional, or personal setting, having a strong vocabulary is essential for effective communication and comprehension.

Vocabulary learning research improves students' academic achievement and gives them the tools they need to deal with the challenges of modern society. Thus, spending money on language study and training improves people's achievement and well-being in all areas of their lives.

5. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the efficacy of targeted vocabulary instruction in considerably improving students' academic performance and vocabulary mastery in comparison to conventional language education. According to quantitative results, students who received focused teaching improved their vocabulary mastery by 30%, exceeding the 16% improvement of the traditional group. These findings highlight the benefits of using interactive, student-centered teaching strategies, which increase participation and improve vocabulary retention over time.

The significance of adjusting vocabulary education to each student's particular needs and preferences was further highlighted by qualitative observations. Innovative teaching techniques including contextual learning and group projects were used by lecturers in the targeted population, which raised engagement and motivation. On the other hand, traditional approaches

frequently depended on rote memorization, which hindered pupils' capacity to use new words in relevant circumstances.

The study emphasizes the need to fund dynamic vocabulary instruction to enhance students' academic performance and provide them with the language skills necessary for both personal and professional success. Students who have a large vocabulary are better able to think critically, communicate their ideas clearly, and persuade others—all of which are essential for success in both academic writing and everyday communication.

In summary, the provision of students with the necessary tools to confidently navigate complicated academic and professional environments is facilitated by the promotion of vocabulary development through targeted instruction. To get an extensive understanding of efficient vocabulary teaching techniques, future studies should examine the long-term effects of such approaches on writing performance and other language abilities.

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